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UNDP COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION POLICY

Report of the Administrator

Summary

The present report outlines advances made in the implementation of the corporate communication and advocacy strategy endorsed by UNDP senior management in July 1995 and Executive Board decisions 96/22 and 97/17. The report emphasizes UNDP outreach targeted to constituencies, especially media, parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations. It also notes the important information role of the liaison and country offices.

UNDP has taken steps in the past year to promote its core message among media and key development partners. The main thrust of that message is that poverty eradication is achievable through the advancement of women, promotion of sustainable livelihoods, protection of the environment and support for good governance.

The challenges for 1998 include: developing clearer and more strategic messages on UNDP development work with the aim of strengthening political and financial support from key audiences; launching strategically targeted advertising campaigns in contributor and programme countries, identifying best practices and success stories where UNDP is bringing value added; implementing the revised UNDP publications policy; implementing the public information disclosure policy; ensuring a broader range of information materials are available in United Nations official languages and on the Internet; and intensifying training of staff in public affairs to make UNDP a more extroverted organization.

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I. PURPOSE

1. The present report responds to Executive Board decision 97/17. It describes the progress achieved in developing and implementing the UNDP communications and advocacy policy.

II. HIGHLIGHTS of 1997

2. UNDP is an organization that has been traditionally action-oriented, but has not aggressively promoted its image. UNDP is striving to build a culture of communication on the foundation of reform. This goal has been inspired by UNDP leadership and by the actions and directives of the Secretary-General. Progress has been made in issuing clearer messages and in telling the complex story of sustainable human development in clear and concise language. At the heart of the information and communication strategy is the need to make linkages between public affairs and resources mobilization.

3. Recognizing that the programme offices are the backbone of the communications and advocacy strategy, the organization is providing training in public affairs to resident representatives, deputy resident representatives, public affairs officers and others. The Division of Public Affairs (DPA) is also working closely with the Division of Information Management and Analysis, which manages the UNDP website, with the aim of greatly expanding its outreach through the posting of its news bulletins UNDP Flash! and the El Nino - as well as media advisories, press releases and statements by the Administrator in English, French and Spanish. In keeping with the recommendations of the Publications Policy task force, greater attention will be paid to the posting on the website of materials in other official languages of the United Nations. The Internet has enhanced global tracking of the media's use of UNDP public information products, statements and digitized photographs and their coverage of UNDP-sponsored events, and stories filed during UNDP-hosted press tours.

4. To ensure the use of the communication strategy throughout UNDP, the organization is recommending that communication and advocacy become a component of all projects and programmes. To continue expanding the visibility of UNDP, regular contacts are now made with the representatives of permanent missions to the United Nations in New York, especially with Executive Board members. In programme countries, resident representatives are continuing to engage donors in dialogue. These initiatives are backed by regular visits by the Administrator and senior managers to donor and developing country capitals, where they meet with top government officials, parliamentarians, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Seminars with parliamentarians and academic institutions have produced effective results, as have visits to UNDP-supported field projects. At the field level, programme countries are devoting staff time to information and advocacy work and making a commitment to raise the UNDP profile in each country.

A. Information in the reformed United Nations system

5. UNDP collaborates closely with the Department of Communications and Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat and with United Nations specialized agencies. Resident coordinators ensure that the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) promote system-wide initiatives in programme countries. UNDP matters now appear frequently on the agenda of the daily news briefing at United Nations Headquarters.

B. Print media

6. UNDP is increasing its visibility at a low cost by utilizing high-profile events. In 1997, the Rio Plus 5 and Habitat II meetings, the Micro-Credit Summit, and international gatherings on governance and climate change provided additional opportunities for information and advocacy. In the coming year, UNDP will highlight governance programmes to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7. In taking up the challenge of paragraph 6 of Executive Board decision 97/17, media products in several languages were distributed during the year. These included UNDP Flash!, El Nino Update, information kits and press packages. At headquarters, messages were distributed in hard copy and electronically in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish as well as in German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and many other languages. Country offices and liaison offices published material in local languages. New software is being used to reorganize the media mailing list to increase the number of people receiving UNDP products and to target them individually with greater accuracy and frequency.

8. To ensure more targeted, accurate, clear and frank public information, DPA organized a media workshop for 30 international journalists from around the world to highlight poverty-related issues. On return to their home countries, journalists wrote articles based on the workshop and associated project visits and created a network to support global anti-poverty efforts. There were UNDP media travelling seminars for more than 100 international reporters from leading newspapers covering four continents during 1997. Countries covered were Angola, Guatemala, Guinea, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Viet Nam. As a result, more than 100 articles appeared in the leading publications of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. The awareness of UNDP initiatives in fighting poverty that was enhanced through these articles has lead to a network of reporters who now rely on UNDP for information and experts they can talk to. In some cases, the articles helped to elicit further resources for UNDP work.

9. The workshop and travelling seminars have built a receptive cadre of senior journalists. Not only are these correspondents knowledgeable about UNDP policies and programmes, they are also likely to cover the organization's activities and to seek information and guidance in their regular reporting. Following their experience with UNDP, many participants are themselves in demand as speakers at meetings or in the media as development experts in their own right.

10. In 1998, UNDP will organize further training workshops for journalists and trips to programme countries.

11. UNDP is tracking global media coverage of its programmes. It now subscribes to the Burrell's news-clipping and monitoring service, and the Lexis-Nexis information service. A recent Lexis-Nexis search found more than 2,400 references to UNDP public information products in national and international newspapers, on wire services and on television broadcasts during 1997.

C. Audio-visual and broadcasting opportunities

12. UNDP has increased coverage of the organization's focus areas - poverty, women, jobs, environment and governance - through the distribution of public service announcements, the placing of UNDP experts on radio and TV news shows, and the production of Azimuths, a TV magazine show. UNDP has established a system to facilitate the presence of UNDP experts on radio and television broadcasts around the world. Speakers selected from UNDP staff in the field and at headquarters are available to address topics of relevance to UNDP in a wide variety of languages. UNDP is also stepping up its actions to show the organization's perspective and to highlight its work by participating in other organization's special events, alerting media to the UNDP angle in breaking news stories, helping journalists to produce feature stories, and flagging development concerns for various United Nations days.

13. UNDP produced four public service announcements as well as a number of video press releases that were widely broadcast around the world. Produced in English, French and Spanish, they were edited and dubbed into several national languages of UNDP partners. UNDP programme offices promoted the airing of these video messages on their local stations.

D. Publications

14. The proliferation of publications of uneven quality throughout the organization has long been recognized as a problem in UNDP. In 1997, a task force of the Publications Board was established to review the current situation regarding publications. To date, the task force designed a comprehensive publications policy that mandates a strengthened Publications Board, responsible for improving the overall quality and consistency of UNDP publications, monitoring their planning, marketing, distribution and cost. Implementing the revised UNDP publications policy will be one of the challenges of UNDP in 1998.

15. The weekly newsletter UNDP FLASH!, published in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish and distributed in hard copy, on-line and by fax, has generated increased inquiries from the media. Most of the stories emanate from the programme offices. The news stories are frequently picked up by the Secretary-General's spokesman for presentation at the daily news briefings.

16. In June 1996, the flagship publication, CHOICES, the human development magazine, was relaunched. The publication has already won numerous design

awards. While measuring impact is difficult, a readership survey was included in the October 1997 issue to solicit solid feedback on its quality and usefulness. The results are currently being analysed. Another indication of impact is the fact that some 2,000 unsolicited messages are received each year, requesting placement on the UNDP publications list. The requests come from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academicians, the media and government officials.

17. To respond to the need for clearer and more strategic messages, UNDP introduced a new style for the illustrated annual report, focusing on key themes and specific success stories within those themes. The publication is one of the new outreach tools that presents the organization in a way that general audiences can readily understand.

18. A special effort has been made to produce major UNDP publications in at least three official languages, typically English, French and Spanish. The Human Development Report, an important advocacy tool for the organization, appears in ten languages: Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The number of languages in which reports are published at headquarters will be increased if additional funding becomes available.

19. At the country level, UNDP offices are issuing newsletters and brochures that succinctly describe the activities of UNDP in individual countries. The goal is to help raise the UNDP profile among donors and local constituencies. Publications are increasingly linked to fund-raising efforts; e.g. a recent publication targeted to parliamentarians.

20. As part of the push to create better visibility and awareness for UNDP and to apply this strategy throughout the organization, liaison and country offices are setting up home pages. The broad scope and wide coverage of decentralized electronic communication provides a means of reaching highly focused readership groups in an increasing number of languages.

E. Non-governmental organization liaison and constituency relations

21. Constituency-building not only promotes UNDP programmes and policies but also reinforces resource mobilization. Taking advantage of events and opportunities organized by or in collaboration with partners, both at headquarters and in the field, UNDP carries out advocacy with strategic allies, including NGOs, academics, trade unions, religious groups, intergovernmental organizations, civic leaders, church groups and grass-roots organizations.

22. Two important opportunities for constituency-building and communication in 1997 were the launch of the Human Development Report 1997 and the worldwide commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, held on 17 October. In 1998, the theme for the International Day will be the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; UNDP will focus on the right to development.

Non-governmental organizations

23. DPA established regular contacts with NGOs through monthly briefings under the aegis of the United Nations Department of Communications and Public Information's weekly NGO briefing programme and through provision of resource persons, keynote speakers and information materials for major NGO conferences, expositions and seminars in the North and South. Collaboration between UNDP and NGOs also took place in organizing joint activities.

24. UNDP issued an information disclosure policy in 1997, under which all relevant documents pertaining to the UNDP programming cycle are made available to the public upon request. The policy is part of increased attention by UNDP to accountability. In the same spirit, an NGO/civil society organization (CSO) advisory committee for UNDP is scheduled to be created in 1998 as is an NGO/civil society organization committee.

25. UNDP has created a worldwide advisory board of mayors to help to strengthen relations with city halls, which are on the frontline in the struggle against poverty. One aim is to inform and mobilize mayors worldwide, encouraging them to organize, initiate and support poverty-eradication activities.

Parliamentarians

26. Through the generous support of the Government of Belgium, UNDP has been able to create a network of alliances among members of parliaments. Through this assistance, UNDP and its partners have organized more than 40 major international conferences in the past three years. More than 4,600 participants were parliamentarians, while others were drawn from NGOs, city governments, academic institutions and civil society. Governance, poverty eradication, and gender were the major themes addressed. These activities place UNDP priorities on the agenda of parliamentarians, helping to build support among legislators and policy-makers through direct dialogue. Workshops on women in decision-making held in Finland, India, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and the United States led to the creation of networks of women parliamentarians in several regions. During 1998, some 16 more meetings of parliamentarians are planned.

F. The Information Network

1. Country offices

27. Country offices are an essential component of the information network that UNDP has crafted within the framework of the corporate communication and advocacy strategy. As a result of Direct Line No. 7, issued by the Administrator on 17 January 1996, resident representatives have integrated public affairs into the mainstream of their work. The Direct Line provided $2.6 million of seed money in 1996-1997 needed for country offices to develop public-affairs programmes. A replenishment is anticipated in 1998. Public affairs officers, full or part-time, have been appointed in nearly every country office. In 1997, courses were organized for public affairs officers from country offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Staff members are encouraged to write articles and give speeches on behalf of UNDP.

28. Programmes increasingly incorporate advocacy and communication from the start, with a budget line assigned to information in each project. In 1995, DPA published a comprehensive public affairs manual to assist all staff, especially those in country offices.

29. As part of the drive to apply the communication strategy throughout UNDP, country offices in every region hosted national launches of the Human Development Report 1997, resulting in a record number of media stories. By 1997, a total of 100 national human development reports had been published in over a dozen languages. These publications are important advocacy tools, linking ideas expounded in the global report with the UNDP projects being implemented on the ground in each country.

30. Country offices also played an important role in designing and implementing the travelling media seminars to five regions in 1997.

31. A growing number of offices are benefiting from the synergies evolving integration of UNICs and the Office of the Resident Coordinator. For example, UNICs were major players in organizing joint United Nations system events and in evaluating the success of media campaigns by helping to collect press clippings and monitor broadcasts.

2. Liaison offices

32. UNDP provides information on the UNDP role in development to influential constituencies and the public through its liaison offices in donor capitals. To this end, the offices build close ties with parliamentarians, government officials, development agencies, NGOs, CSOs, academia, schools and the business sector. The offices work closely with UNICs and with the representatives of the United Nations specialized agencies. United Nations associations and a network of UNDP correspondents - retired UNDP professionals - are among the allies that help to spread outreach to communities throughout the countries served. All offices use the latest electronic technology both for transmitting materials and for monitoring the media use of UNDP releases and information.

33. The European Office in Geneva maintains direct contact with members of parliament, government officials and the general public in European countries, especially Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. In support of this process, it distributes a digest specially targeted to parliamentarians. More than 50 European mayors have been enlisted in the World Alliance of Cities against Poverty.

34. The Nordic Liaison Office in Copenhagen has sub-offices in Oslo and Stockholm, and is looking at how to extend coverage to Finland. The Nordic Liaison Office identifies NGOs and other partners in the development community to collaborate in all launchings, conferences and other activities, in order to increase impact and to ensure a local angle to the issue at hand. This office also organized media trips to Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mali, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Viet Nam, which resulted in 313 articles in the print media and 167 minutes of air time on radio and television. The media trip to Kyrgyzstan resulted in television coverage of the plight of children. After viewing the coverage,

Norwegian officials contributed $1 million to set up an institution to help children in Kyrgyzstan.

35. The Brussels Office creates numerous opportunities to present UNDP work to organizations of the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as to those of the Governments of the Benelux countries. Presentations in 1997 focused on overseas development assistance, governance, conflict prevention and the environment.

36. For the Tokyo Liaison Office, media relations are a major component of the work. Focused distribution of media materials is complemented by direct contact with journalists. The office has vigorously participated in a United Nations system-wide information and advocacy campaign that emphasizes the importance of development and humanitarian assistance. The Tokyo Office devotes special attention to providing materials in Japanese, which are distributed by fax and electronically, wherever possible. An entirely new pamphlet, explaining the policies and achievements of UNDP for Japanese audiences, was published in 1997.

37. The principal task of the Washington Office is to enhance public awareness and support for UNDP in the United States by presenting UNDP both in Washington and around the country, through joint advocacy with Congress, NGOs and private sector constituencies.

38. To supplement the work of the liaison offices, UNDP officials make regular visits to donor countries for high-level consultations. As indicated in other parts of the present report, UNDP also participates in special events in donor countries.

III. NEXT STEPS

39. UNDP intends to continue joining forces with development partners to increase advocacy for anti-poverty measures. As part of the process to strengthen UNDP-donor country cooperation, DPA plans to systematize the development of country booklets on programme co-financing, boost co-productions of the Azimuths television magazine, increase co-sponsorship of media trips, and regularize exchange of information on success stories. In addition, the format of the special booklet developed for parliamentarians facilitates the inclusion of material tailored to individual countries. Negotiations with programme country partners are also under way to bolster their role in advocating for development in general and UNDP in particular, especially in donor countries.

40. Outreach to parliamentarians has been highly successful with support from a Belgian trust fund; UNDP will seek to extend and expand this work. There are also plans to build routinely into the schedules of parliamentarians visits to project and programme sites to allow them to witness first hand the difference that UNDP is making in the lives of ordinary people.

41. There will be expanded deployment of eminent public personalities from the North and the South to highlight the role of UNDP in the worldwide crusade against poverty. The first Goodwill Ambassador, internationally acclaimed actor and human rights activist Danny Glover, was officially appointed in March 1998.

Two more goodwill ambassadors are expected to be appointed in Europe and Japan this year. The Administrator will appoint international personalities while regional and national spokespersons will be chosen from a pool of candidates provided by country and liaison offices to enable UNDP to reach multiple audiences.

42. UNDP aims to distribute publications in multiple languages. While local production helps to increase the number of language versions, the limiting factor at headquarters is the shortage of financial resources. To overcome financial constraints, a campaign is under way to ensure the systematic earmarking of resources for communication and advocacy in the budgets of all programmes, projects and special funds at the international, regional and national levels. Additionally, in-kind information contributions are sought from donors, government counterparts, NGOs and other stakeholders.

IV. CHALLENGES FOR 1998

43. UNDP faces several key challenges in 1998 in implementing Board legislation, notably decisions 97/17 on the communications and information policy, 98/1 on narrowing the focus of UNDP interventions and 98/3 on the funding strategy for UNDP. These are to:

(a) Sharpen the UNDP profile, differentiating the organization clearly from other providers of development services;

(b) Identify and publicize best practices and success stories where UNDP is bringing value added and making a difference on the lives of the poor;

(c) Develop clearer and more strategic messages on UNDP development work that will mobilize political and financial support from target audiences;

(d) Implement the public information disclosure policy;

(e) Launch strategically targeted advertising campaigns in contributor and programme countries;

(f) Implement the revised UNDP publications policy;

(g) Streamline information materials and publications;

(h) Ensure that relevant information materials are in United Nations working languages and on the Internet;

(i) Intensify training to make UNDP a more extroverted organization so that staff are better trained to talk about what UNDP does, what it stands for and the positive results it has had;

(j) Identify strategic events and forums for raising UNDP's profile in a wide range of constituencies in both programme and contributor countries.

44. As indicated in the above paragraphs, and as reflected in the introduction to the annual report of the Administrator (DP/1998/17), important progress was made in 1997 to sharpen the profile of UNDP in response to Executive Board legislation, the evolving development cooperation environment, and United Nations reforms. Efforts are being made to build a more extroverted organization based on a true communications culture. However, much more needs to be done to carve out a distinctive profile for UNDP in implementing decisions 98/1 and 98/3.

45. The Administrator is committed to overcoming the difficulties involved in creating a sharper corporate profile for UNDP; building on important progress in communications to date; and in improving public knowledge of UNDP work at the global, regional and country levels in helping programme countries to combat poverty and work towards sustainable human development.

V. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

46. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the report of the Administrator on communication and information policy (DP/1998/23);

2. Continue its support, in the spirit of decisions 97/17 and 98/3, to the efforts of UNDP to project a clear image of its development work.